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## Leadership Styles and Employee Commitment

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## Introduction

According to the Society for Human Resources Management (January, 2011) difficulty with managers was cited as the number one reason for employees leaving their jobs. Employees who leave employment are often leaving their managers, rather than their positions or even the organization. Christmas (2009) argues that “many of the troubling problems the United States currently faces are the result of failed leadership...” (p.128). Johnson and Klee (2007) define leadership styles as consistent, repetitive and predictable patterns of behaviors that are exhibited by leaders over a period of time (p.130). Managing employees consists of not only hiring and firing employees, but coaching, mentoring, engaging, and communicating with employees. Managers have a great deal of responsibility and impact on their employees’ well being while they are at work. The style in which managers interact with employees is known as their personal leadership style. “The success and growth of an organization today depends on effective leadership at all levels in the organizational hierarchy” (Nair, 2009, p.1). Sarros, Cooper, and Santora (2008) state that “... management behaviors reinforce principles of the culture” and have been used as predictors for organizational success and conflict (p. 145). Managers have an apparent impact on the work environment and their employees.

## Problem Statement

Managers impact the work environment, culture of an organization, and the well being of their employees. Unfortunately, managers do not always have the self awareness, knowledge or skill to manage their own behavior so that they, their employees, and organizations can be successful in reaching their full potential. The purpose of this project is to develop a plan which will improve employee morale, commitment, and organizational performance.

## Data Collection

Participants took part in a survey on leadership styles and their perceived impact, if any on organizational commitment and conflict. An invitation was sent to all employees to participate. The participants were from varying demographics, marital status, genders, educational backgrounds, and age. An anonymous survey consisting of forty questions was administered using the on-line survey engine, Survey Monkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)). An anonymous survey was important to this process so that employees would feel comfortable sharing their honest opinions and feelings when answering the survey questions. The survey questions were randomly placed throughout the survey, and were divided to identify: leadership styles, conflict management, and employee commitment. Conflict survey questions were modeled after Kraybill's Conflict Style Inventory. Kraybill's Conflict Style Inventory is widely used in training and leadership programs. Leadership style survey questions were modeled after My Skills Profile Leadership questionnaire ([www.myskillsprofile.com](http://www.myskillsprofile.com)).

## Data Analysis

A chi-square test of independence was performed to determine if a relationship exists between leadership styles and the amount of perceived conflict. The relationship between these variables was not found to be significant. Leadership styles do not appear to influence the amount of perceived conflict by employees. However, different leadership styles did have varying degrees of conflict reported by employees. There were four possible leadership style outcomes: authoritative, autocratic, participatory, or transformational. Leadership styles were determined based on participants' response. Kraybill's Conflict Style Inventory was used to determine types of conflict. There were eight possible types of conflict: Avoiding,

Avoiding/Collaborating, Collaborating, Collaborating/Compromising, Collaborating/Forcing, Compromising, Compromising/Avoiding, Forcing, Forcing/Compromising, Participatory, and Participatory/Avoiding. Kraybill's Conflict Style Inventory was used to determine which of the eight possible types of conflict were used by managers. Managers could and did exhibit more than one type of conflict style which is noted in the results.

Next, a chi-square test of independence was performed to determine if any relationship exists between leadership styles and commitment level of employees. The relationship between these variables was found to be significant. Employees who had an authoritative leader noted a low level of organizational commitment. Authoritative leaders have a strict manner in which they direct or tell their employees which tasks to accomplish and how to accomplish those tasks. Authoritative leaders do not value discussion or negotiation with their employees. They can be seen as cold, harsh, or uncaring and are rarely interested in the ideas of their employees, believing they possess the better skills and have more knowledge than their employees. The relationship between employee and manager centers on task at hand (Howard, 2005).

Interestingly, the autocratic leadership style carried a high rating of commitment from employees, although not as high as the participatory and transformational leaders. Autocratic leaders delegate work to their employees but they make all of the decisions. They dictate specific direction for a task and how it is to be accomplished. Employees with a participatory or transformational leader noted a high level of commitment. Both participatory and transformational leaders attempt to motivate employees and include them in discussion and decision making whenever possible. They are interested in developing employees and assisting them in reaching their potential. These leadership styles offer intellectual stimulation,



individualized consideration, employee engagement, and appreciation of their employees (Howard, 2005).

The survey identified managers as having a significant impact on the work environment, culture and commitment level of employees. However, managers do not always have the knowledge necessary to change their behavior or the skills to motivate employees. I believe that proper training and mentoring of managers can reduce employee turnover and increase employee engagement. A potential solution that we have implemented at the South Carolina State Library is creation of our own Leadership Development and mentoring program.

#### Implementation Plan

The Leadership Development program requires managers to receive training that will encourage the type of management skills and behavior that we require of our leaders, at the South Carolina State Library. Our values dictate the way we work with each other as we perform our mission and pursue our vision. We understand that our performance and behavior are guided as much by the spirit of the values as by the definition of the values. Our core values are:

- **Communication:** We believe communication is essential to performing our mission and pursuing our vision. Communication is vital to building organizational trust and is the hallmark of respect. Communication is a multifaceted, mutually beneficial process, and the transformation of ideas is crucial to organizational advancement. We believe the articulation of ideas by people engaged in an open-minded exchange results in new concepts, different perspectives and organizational excellence.
- **Professionalism:** We believe professionalism is an essential value and a well-trained and knowledgeable staff is our greatest asset. Integrity, respect and fairness guide our performance as we strive to exemplify professionalism in everything we do for the state of South Carolina.
- **Collaboration:** We believe the best possible results are achieved through partnerships and teamwork. When the ideas and actions of all interested parties are wisely considered the whole is always greater than the sum of the parts.

- **Leadership:** We believe that leadership is organizational and personal. At the center of leadership is accountability for the responsibilities we have been assigned. We believe that good leadership is characterized by the ability to make decisions, take risks, and manage failure. We believe great leadership creates an environment of inspiration.
- **Innovation:** We believe that change is constant in the competitive organization. At its heart are people thinking outside the sphere of current norms and learning to live beyond their zone of comfort. Through the well-considered use of new models, practices, and appropriate technology we can define the intellectual landscape of South Carolina.

This Leadership Development program focuses on having solid communication, in a professional manner. We believe that successful leadership comes in part from relationships and collaboration.

The program Training includes Myers-Briggs training, emotional intelligence training, understanding finances, project management, managing for diversity, conflict resolution, performance management, and ethical leadership training. The Leadership Training track will help managers identify their own strengths and weaknesses giving them the skills and self awareness to make changes so that they can be successful and have productive, committed employees. The mentoring component of the Leadership Development program will consist of matching new managers with seasoned managers who can offer guidance and coaching specific to the manager in training. The mentoring component is equally as important as the training because it will enable managers to implement and tweak training that they receive to fit their individual circumstances and needs.

Managers and human resource professionals must enroll new managers in the Leadership Development program so that they can be successful. Human resource professionals along with managers must assign a mentor to the manager, to aid the manager in training. Existing managers

are encouraged to participate in the program as well. However, the program can be mandatory for this staff if there is a need.

The Leadership Development program will take between six months and a year to complete depending on employees skill sets and schedules. The cost will be approximately \$1,500. Cost and time are potential obstacles for success to this implementation plan. Managers will have to buy-in to the program in order for it to be successful. The South Carolina Budget and Control Board's Human Resource Division offers potential resources for training of managers, other vendors, and employees offer additional resources. The Leadership Development program will become a standard operating procedure for new managers as part of their new employee orientation and training package; existing managers who require coaching as identified by their own managers will be enrolled in the program as well.

#### Evaluation Method

After all members of management have successfully completed the Leadership Training track, the survey used for this study will be repeated to gauge employee perception of their work environment and their commitment level of the organization. Additionally, the mentor assigned to the manager in training will evaluate their mentee's progress. Once the manager in training has successfully completed the Leadership Development program, they will be eligible and encouraged to become a mentor for a new manager, either at the South Carolina State Library or a manager with one of our public libraries, or a state employee.



## Summary and Recommendations

This Leadership Development program can be implemented statewide. We can change the culture of organizations and work environments by having our successful leaders, mentor new managers or managers who are in need of additional coaching.

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## Appendix I

## Leadership and Conflict Styles Inventory

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5
<hr/>				
1. My supervisor makes decisions quickly.				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. My supervisor seems concerned about making his / her mark.				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I consider my supervisor innovative.				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. My supervisor is aggressive or forceful.				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. My supervisor pitches in and leads by example.				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. My supervisor includes me when making decisions.

☐☐☐☐☐

7. My supervisor ensures that all employees' views are related with equal consideration.

☐☐☐☐☐

8. My supervisor pushes to get his / her opinion across.

☐☐☐☐☐

9. I believe my supervisor is flexible and is prepared to bend the rules when needed.

☐☐☐☐☐

10. My supervisor's primary focus is on my performance.

☐☐☐☐☐

11. My supervisor gives commands and does not seek the ideas of others.

☐☐☐☐☐



12. My supervisor is thoughtful and appreciative.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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13. My work environment fosters teaching people and sharing knowledge.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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14. My supervisor is unavailable.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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15. I am given freedom and opportunities to test myself.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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16. My supervisor looks for solutions somewhere in the middle.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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17. Everyone in my team is viewed as an equal by management.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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18. My supervisor pulls back from discussion to avoid conflict and tension.

☐☐☐☐☐

19. My supervisor thoroughly explains ideas and takes steps to understand others.

☐☐☐☐☐

20. My supervisor sets demanding targets and difficult goals.

☐☐☐☐

21. My supervisor is more concerned with his / her goals than how others feel.

☐☐☐☐☐

22. I believe my supervisor listens to what our team wants to do.

☐☐☐☐☐

23. My supervisor avoids discussing differences of opinions.

☐☐☐☐☐

24. My supervisor gives up some points in exchange for others.

☐☐☐☐☐

25. My supervisor dictates expected actions and results.

☐☐☐☐☐

26. My supervisor participates in active discussion and looks for ways to meet the needs of others as well.

☐☐☐☐☐

27. My supervisor does not recognize the opinions of others.

☐☐☐☐☐

28. My supervisor compromises some of his/her preferences with those of other opposing preferences.

☐☐☐☐☐

29. My supervisor is energetic and lively.

☐☐☐☐☐

My supervisor doesn't push for things to be done his/her way, and he/she pulls back  
30. somewhat from the demands of others.

☐☐☐☐☐

31. My supervisor has a micro-management style.

☐☐☐☐☐

32. My supervisor does not interact with others and attempts to stay at a safe distance.

☐☐☐☐☐

33. My Supervisor acts solely on his / her own opinions.

☐☐☐☐☐

34. My supervisor respects the opinion of others and expresses his/her opinion openly.

☐☐☐☐☐

35. My supervisor uses moderation and compromise to make decisions.



<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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36. I enjoy the work that I do.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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37. I am committed to my position.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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38. I am currently looking for another job.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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39. I experience or witness conflict regularly at work.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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40. I am envious of other teams' support from their supervisor.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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## Appendix II

## Leadership and Conflict Styles Results

